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ABSTRACT

In September 1992, Australia's commonwealth, state, and territory ministers for education and training established a working party to draft a national policy regarding adult community education (ACE). The resulting policy was based on the principle that ACE is an educational provision in its own right that also complements the core provision of the school, Technical and Further Education, and higher education systems; it concentrated on the provision of learning opportunities at the community level through a variety of settings and delivery modes. The policy's six stated goals were as follows: realize the potential of ACE; achieve access and equity; provide diverse opportunities and outcomes for lifelong learning; provide learning pathways to further learning or employment; ensure the quality of ACE; and strengthen partnerships of the community with government, industry, and other education sectors. Intended outcomes and strategies for achieving each of the six goals were formulated. (MN)

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NATIONAL POLICY

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ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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NATIONAL POLICY

ACE/MOVEET MEETING
HOBART DECEMBER 3 1993

ENDORSED BY COMMONWEALTH,
STATE AND TERRITORY MINISTERS

This national policy provides a framework for activity for Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in the field of Adult Community Education (ACE).

The policy was commissioned by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers to provide a framework for government to recognise, enhance and support ACE.

Within the framework of this national policy, quality ACE can be delivered across the nation in ways which best suit local needs. The policy recognises the great diversity of ACE settings and the variety of government orientations around Australia. It identifies goals, outcomes and strategies for action. Implementation will be determined by individual governments.

BACKGROUND

In recent years adult community education (ACE) has experienced significant growth and is continuing to do so. Course enrolments in the 1980s were almost double those of the 1970s and the growth shows no sign of slowing down. Participation is variously estimated to be in excess of one million per year. ACE often plays a community development role, it interfaces with school education, vocational education and training and higher education, and is by its nature diverse. It was formally acknowledged at the national level in the 1991 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training called **Come in Cinderella - The Emergence of Adult and Community Education** which described ACE as the fourth sector of education. The policy draws on the findings of the Senate report and the widespread consultation process it encompassed.

The Senate report recommended the development of a national policy on ACE to guide its further growth and development. In September, 1992 Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Education and Training (at a joint AEC/MOVEET meeting) agreed to establish a joint AEC/MOVEET Working Party (to be convened by South Australia) to consider the implications of the report pending the establishment of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and clarification of the scope and boundaries of ANTA in relation to adult education. The proposed working party would have representatives of all States and Territories and the Commonwealth, and would also include co-opted representatives from the self-managing adult education sector and the Conference of Senior Officers in Adult Education. The working party was to draft a national policy for Ministers' consideration, and this policy is the outcome of that process.

This policy recognises that adult community education is an educational provision that exists in its own right. It also complements the core provision of the school, TAFE and higher education systems and may provide alternative access to these systems.

Some of the recommended strategies may be implemented nationally, while others may require specific Commonwealth, State and Territory responses. It is accepted that outcomes and strategies additional to those listed may be adopted by individual authorities and that different priorities may apply in the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

DESCRIPTION OF ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In this policy the term adult community education (ACE) is used to represent provision that is variously described as: adult education; adult community education; adult and community education; adult, community and further education; adult education in the community; community owned and managed adult education; community based education and community adult education. The operation is different in each State and Territory. It is governed by specific legislation in New South Wales and Victoria and operates under general education and training legislation in other States and Territories.

ACE aims to provide opportunities to improve the knowledge, skills and quality of life for adult Australians. ACE aims to meet the diverse lifelong learning needs of adults so that they may confidently participate in society. It contributes to Australia's development as a creative, skilled, flexible and cultured society and in so doing enhances the capacity of local communities to provide educational opportunities for their members.

ACE increases opportunities especially for adults with special needs who are under-represented in employment and training, for example, people without adequate social and functional skills in English language, literacy and/or numeracy, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people not in the paid workforce, people who are geographically or socially isolated, people without post secondary education, low income people and immigrants and those people of a non-English speaking background. ACE recognises a special responsibility for the education of older people whose education interests are not a priority for schools, TAFE and higher education.

ACE gives women access to educational opportunities which are significantly shaped in content, method and style by women. Women comprise at least 75% of ACE students in Australia. This high proportion of women as students is matched by a similar predominance of women as teachers, administrators, and as members of committees of community managed providers.

ACE identifies and responds educationally to individual, vocational, family, community, cultural and social needs. These needs are met through programs as diverse as literacy, basic education, English and multi-cultural language acquisition, study skills, preparation for tertiary education, vocational preparation, job-related training, skills development, retraining and general education.

General adult education programs include history, literature, languages, politics, philosophy, science, arts, crafts, health, personal development and many other subjects. This is the longest standing and best known form of ACE.

General adult education also makes a significant contribution to the development of work skills. Many participants cite vocational purposes as their reason for enrolling in these programs. Many more gain skills, confidence, knowledge and understanding from participating, which they then apply in their workplace or in seeking work or in further education and training.

Access, pre-vocational and vocationally specific courses are a rapidly growing component of ACE. Literacy, numeracy, basic education, English as a second language, English language and literacy on the job, tertiary entrance qualifications and accredited vocational courses belong to this category.

ACE supports and encourages local communities and communities of interest in identifying, responding to and meeting the educational needs of their members. It strengthens communities by building diverse skills and capacities. These may include enterprise skills and community management skills.

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The whole range of ACE programs is notable for the way it assists adults to enhance their family and inter personal relationships and their participation in local community activities and broader societal debates around issues like the environment, understanding of specific cultures and histories, and participative democracy.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

The learning activities of adults pervade all aspects of their lives. The opportunities and avenues for adults to engage in learning are included in the objectives of a wide range of organisations and activities. These include our universities, TAFE institutions and schools, libraries, work places, professional and industrial organisations and industry, commerce and cultural, religious, artistic and entertainment centres. Moreover, government agencies, Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local, involved in health, welfare, agriculture, the environment, law, labour, prisons and communications all have major programs which involve the education of the community.

While recognising this diversity, the focus of this policy statement generally concentrates upon the provision of learning opportunities at a community level through a variety of settings and delivery modes. This often involves the harnessing of local expertise and resources.

Given the breadth and diversity of ACE, this policy statement is not concerned to provide a definition of the precise boundaries of ACE, recognising that this is best done in each of the States and Territories.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER ACTION

This policy provides a framework for government action. Implementation will take place at the national, State and Territory levels.

As recommended in **Come in Cinderella**, the Commonwealth has established an office within the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) which is responsible for the development of Commonwealth policy in ACE.

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) will give advice to the Commonwealth Minister on strategies, targets, and resources associated with the provision of ACE by both government and community based agencies.

The contribution of ACE to vocational education and training is recognised at the national level by the inclusion of ACE in ANTA's area of responsibility.

This dynamic policy and its goals will be reviewed from time to time in response to the changing needs of Australian society. It will provide a basis for agenda items on ACE at Ministerial Councils.

The policy will provide a context for the States and Territories working with the Commonwealth to develop targets for the strategies listed here. Decisions about the allocation of resources will be determined by individual States and Territories.

PRINCIPLES

This ACE policy is based on the following principles:

- adults have diverse and changing learning needs throughout their lives and require a correspondingly diverse range of responses with a variety of provision and a plurality of choice and educational pathways;

- adults learn effectively when they are actively involved in decisions about the management, content, style and delivery of their learning;

- adult learning is fostered through a curriculum and methodology which involves collaboration between teacher and learner;

- adult learning should be accessible, appropriate, stimulating and affordable in recognition of differing circumstances and constraints;

- local community organisations can readily identify and respond to the needs of their local community;

- services should support and strengthen existing community networks and help create new ones;

- community provision is more responsive and comprehensive when collaboration occurs between the sectors of education and training.

GOALS

This policy has six general goals:

GOAL 1

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF ACE

GOAL 2

ACCESS AND EQUITY

GOAL 3

OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES

GOAL 4

LEARNING PATHWAYS

GOAL 5

QUALITY

GOAL 6

PARTNERSHIPS

GOAL 1

TO REALISE THE POTENTIAL OF ACE

This goal recognises that ACE has yet to reach its full potential in contributing to the general and vocational education and training of adults and will only do so with continuing broad Commonwealth, State, Territory and, where appropriate, local government recognition and support.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
1.1 Policy development at national, Commonwealth, State and Territory levels, in the areas of general adult education and vocational education and training, will reflect the existing and potential role of ACE which often involves the harnessing of local expertise and resources.	(a) Include ACE input in national, Commonwealth, State and Territory discussions relating to general adult and vocational education and training, for example, articulation, recognition of prior learning, accreditation, educational research, competency based training and the allocation of resources.
1.2 Ongoing national policy development regarding ACE will reflect the strengths and needs of all States and Territories and be communicated to relevant Ministers.	(a) Maintain or establish appropriate government mechanisms whose charters specifically include the support and promotion of ACE provision. (b) Identify or establish national mechanisms to provide ongoing advice to Ministers and relevant bodies within established post-compulsory structures.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
1.3 The existing and potential contribution of ACE to general and vocational educational and training will be considered in the allocation of government resources. The allocation of government resources for ACE will be based on clear and consistent funding principles	**(a)** Use a national data collection system (e.g.NATMISS) which: ▶ identifies statistics on ACE ▶ is able to report separately on the different types of providers of ACE **(b)** Develop and implement funding arrangements which are based on clear and consistent funding principles. **(c)** Remove anomalies which disadvantage not-for-profit ACE providers, eg. sales tax, payroll tax and fringe benefit tax.
1.4 ACE provision will be expanded to agreed levels in line with government and community priorities.	**(a)** Allocate government funds to support administration as well as specific program delivery in community based organisations. **(b)** Develop a phased collaborative expansion strategy. **(c)** Diversify the funding base of community based providers by identifying further opportunities for them to conduct programs, eg. fee for service and labour market programs.

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INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
1.5 Community, government, institutional and industry providers will have a clear understanding of the terminology, role and benefits of ACE.	**(a)** Conduct and support regular promotional campaigns to heighten the profile of ACE.
	(b) Include the role of ACE in general promotional and marketing campaigns eg. literacy and special public education campaigns.them to conduct programs, eg. fee for service and labour market programs.
1.6 ACE will be part of the exchange of information and developments on a national and international level.	**(a)** Encourage the involvement of ACE in national and international forums and networks.
	(b) Identify and access national and international information about ACE through existing clearing houses such as National Centre for Vocational Education Research and the National Literacy and Language Institute of Australia.

GOAL 2

TO ACHIEVE ACCESS AND EQUITY

This goal recognises that ACE has a well developed competence in meeting special educational needs and circumstances and that it will increase learning opportunities, pathways and outcomes for the community, particularly for groups and individuals under-represented in employment, education and training.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
2.1 There will be greater opportunities for adults with special needs to become aware of the possibilities ACE holds for them in developing skills and knowledge.	**(a)** Support the development and implementation of improved information and advice services.
	(b) Conduct and support regular promotional campaigns to heighten the profile of ACE so that it is a nationally recognised identity.
	(c) Monitor participation of adults with special needs and the strategies adopted to increase their participation.
2.2 Modes of delivery of ACE, access, entry and exit points, curriculum design and materials will reflect the special learning needs of adults to ensure access for groups under represented in education, employment and training.	**(a)** Promote the development of flexible modes of delivery which reflect the diverse needs of adults.
	(b) Facilitate the provision of appropriate professional development.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
	(c) Disseminate information regarding good practice.
	(d) Within ACE and between sectors where appropriate, facilitate cooperative approaches to curriculum development and/or documentation.
2.3 Barriers to the participation of groups under represented in employment, education and training will be reduced.	(a) Provide incentives through designated funding for ACE to identify and overcome barriers to participation.
	(b) Negotiate access to services, such as dependent care (including childcare), counselling and aids for people with disabilities, in order to optimise participation in ACE.
	(c) Provide incentives for the development of local provision.
	(d) Provide incentives and develop cooperative arrangements for the use of open learning technology to meet the needs of isolated adults.
	(e) Facilitate flexible and affordable use by ACE of public resources, technology and venues.

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GOAL 3

TO PROVIDE DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

This goal recognises that adults should be able to participate in learning which is appropriate to their needs and aspirations and which contributes to their acquisition of skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to achieving their full potential.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
3.1 Participation in ACE will increase, particularly by adults who have fewer than twelve years of schooling.	(a) Diversify the funding base of community provision by identifying further opportunities for providers to conduct programs.
	(b) Support the design and marketing of strategies that are directed to adults who have fewer than twelve years of schooling.
3.2 There will be increased opportunities for adults to develop and manage their own learning programs.	(a) Facilitate the provision of training which offers access to current adult teaching methodology and principles of negotiated programing.
	(b) Facilitate the provision of training which offers access to the development of skills in identifying learning needs.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
	(c) Provide training and access to information about available funding, submission preparation, adult learning principles and program management.
3.3 ACE will continue to provide programs which reflect learners' desires for ▶ social outcomes ▶ recreational outcomes ▶ vocational outcomes ▶ cultural outcomes ▶ civic outcomes ▶ personal outcomes ▶ income generating outcomes ▶ pathways to other sectors activities.	(a) Develop policy and strategic plans which recognise all these outcomes (b) Facilitate the provision of training to achieve these outcomes. (c) Allocate government funds to support administration as well as specific program delivery in community based organisations.

GOAL 4

TO PROVIDE LEARNING PATHWAYS

This goal recognises that for some people ACE is an end in itself and for many it is an opportunity which creates pathways to further learning or employment.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
4.1 There will be clear pathways for individuals to and from ACE, other education sectors and industry training. There will be increased recognition by other sectors of the educational outcomes of ACE.	**(a)** Facilitate the participation of ACE in the development and use of mechanisms for the recognition of the skills and competencies acquired through the participation in ACE programs. **(b)** Develop and improve articulation arrangements between ACE, other education sectors and industry training. **(c)** Provide incentives for ACE to provide nationally recognised training or seek recognition of existing programs through the National Framework for the Recognition of Training (NFROT) where appropriate to facilitate articulation.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
	(d) Develop and implement improved credit transfer arrangements between ACE, other education sectors and industry training and develop improved recognition of prior learning.
4.2 Adults will be able to make informed decisions about their participation in ACE and subsequent activities.	**(a)** Develop mechanisms to provide public information and referral services relating to ACE programs and the learning pathways they provide.
	(b) Provide counselling for students about learning pathways.
	(c) Provide training for providers in the principles and sound practices of marketing.

GOAL 5

TO ENSURE QUALITY

This goal recognises that stakeholders in ACE have expectations that quality will be assured

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
5.1 ACE programs will be highly rated as meeting the needs of individual participants and offering value for money. There will be flexible delivery modes in ACE making it responsive to the needs of individual learners.	(a) Facilitate appropriate and cooperative professional development. (b) Promote the involvement of a broad cross section of adults in determining needs and in planning, delivering and evaluating ACE in their local communities. (c) Disseminate information regarding best practice and quality assurance. (d) Within ACE and between sectors encouragewhere appropriate, co-operative approaches to curriculum development/documentation. (e) Improve the capacity to measure and report on the outcomes of ACE.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
5.2 ACT organisations will demonstrate effective financial, human and physical resource management practices.	(a) Provide appropriate professional development for those with management responsibilities in ACT.
Financial management practices of ACT organisations will meet accountability criteria.	(b) Disseminate information regarding best management practice and quality assurance.
5.3 Appropriate working conditions will operate for paid and volunteer workers in ACT.	(a) Develop appropriate working conditions for paid and volunteer workers in ACT.
There will be career path options in ACT.	(b) Develop career path options.
	(c) Facilitate professional development and clear learning pathways for ACT workers (including formal study).
	(d) Facilitate short term professional development exchanges between agencies.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
5.4 There will be appropriate research and evaluation undertaken to support the further development of ACT.	(a) Collect appropriate qualitative and quantitative data at regular intervals.
	(b) Facilitate the development of research and evaluation skills and activity within ACT to inform planning, including action/participatory research.
	(c) Examine the feasibility and practice of a research and development clearing house in ACT.
	(d) Disseminate information regarding best practice, quality assurance and research.
5.5 ACT will have access to State, Territory and national curriculum development.	(a) Facilitate the involvement of ACT in State, Territory and national curriculum development.

GOAL 6

TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS OF COMMUNITY WITH GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY AND OTHER EDUCATION SECTORS

This goal recognises that the strengths inherent in the community can be complemented by government support and that government strategies can be enhanced by the experience and contribution of communities, and also that ACE can provide cost effective education and training for enterprises seeking specific training for their employees.

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
6.1 There will be government support for the development and enhancement of ACE provision.	(a) Allocate government funds to support administration as well as specific program delivery in community based organisations.
	(b) Facilitate flexible and affordable use by ACE of existing public resources, technology and venues.
	(c) Develop and maintain regional structures where appropriate to increase community involvement in priority setting and allocation of government funds.
	(d) Promote the involvement of adults in determining needs and in planning and delivering ACE in their local communities.
	(e) Provide training for ACE managers and organisers, paid and volunteer workers.

GOAL 6

INTENDED OUTCOMES	STRATEGIES
6.2 There will be increased recognition by government of ACT as a vehicle for delivering government education and training programs.	(a) Encourage governments to seek ACT participation in their public education campaigns and education and training programs. (b) Inform governments of the work of and outcomes from ACT provision.
6.3 There will be greater cooperation between ACT providers, and other government agencies, education sectors and industry.	(a) Encourage providers to link with other agencies to meet the specific learning needs of particular groups. (b) Conduct and support promotional campaigns to industry highlighting the capacity of ACT to provide quality cost effective training.
6.4 There will be a diversified funding base.	(a) Identify opportunities for fee for service and labour market programs. (b) Identify opportunities for sponsorship.

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